

# St. Catherine Creek

## *National Wildlife Refuge*



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### Refuge Facts

- Established: 1990.
- Acres: 24,125, with a potential size of 34,256 acres.
- Other management: conservation easements - seven in five counties, totaling 3,935 acres; fee title tracts - one in two counties, totaling 460 acres.
- Refuge located in the western section of Adams County in southwest Mississippi, 7 miles south of Natchez, MS. The western boundary of the refuge is the Mississippi River with the eastern boundary following the bluffs and the southern boundary, the Homochitto River.

### Natural History

- Habitat within St. Catherine Creek NWR offers a myriad of ecological niches for wildlife.
- Cypress swamps and hardwood forests teeming with oak, gum, elm, ash and cottonwood comprise 30 percent of the refuge.
- Ten percent of the acreage is open water, while the remaining area consists of cleared land and land created due to the meandering of the Mississippi River.
- Rains and backwater flooding fill depressions and basins in low areas creating optimum wintering ground for waterfowl. Natural water bodies and a multitude of beaver ponds create ideal habitat for summer nesting wood ducks.

### Financial Impact of Refuge

- Six-person staff.
- 15,000 visitors annually.
- Current budget (FY 99) \$610,000.

### Refuge Objectives

- Provide and maintain optimum habitat for migratory waterfowl consistent with the overall objectives of the Mississippi Flyway.
- Provide habitat and protection for endangered and threatened species including the peregrine falcon, bald eagle, big-eared bat and the alligator.
- Provide habitat for natural diversity of wildlife and plant species.
- Provide opportunities for wildlife-oriented recreation and environmental education when compatible with other refuge objectives.

### Management Tools

- Water management for waterfowl, wood storks and wading bird rookeries.
- Cooperative farming.
- Prescribed fire.
- Mechanical/chemical control of noxious plants.
- Deer management with public hunting.
- Education/interpretation.
- Law enforcement.
- Partnerships.

### Public Use Opportunities

- Trails.
- Fishing.
- Wildlife observation.
- Photography.
- Hunting.
- Auto tour route (under construction).

## St. Catherine Creek National Wildlife Refuge

### Calendar of Events

**January:** youth waterfowl hunt.

**February:** squirrel, raccoon, and rabbit hunting.

**March:** Watchable Wildlife Program, fishing opens.

**April:** turkey hunt (youth only).

**May:** Migratory Bird Day.

**September:** Sportsman Expo.

**October:** National Wildlife Refuge Week.

**October-November:** archery deer, squirrel and rabbit hunting.

**November-January:** waterfowl hunting.

**November:** youth gun hunt for deer.

**December:** primitive weapon deer hunting, wheelchair-dependent handicapped deer hunt.

### Questions and Answers

*Do you have hunting programs available to the public?*

Yes, our hunting season begins October 1 of each year with archery deer hunting. It is followed by primitive deer hunting, archery and muzzle loader. We have a small game hunt for squirrel and rabbit, steel shot only; a newly established waterfowl hunt that coincides with the state seasons; and we will be adding raccoon hunting for the first time. We also have a youth turkey hunt and a youth gun hunt for deer.

*Do you allow fishing on St. Catherine Creek NWR?*

Yes, our fishing season opens each year on March 1 and ends on September 15. We allow fishing on several bodies of water located on the refuge, Butler Lake Unit, River Road Unit, Gilliard Lake, The Swamp, The Shute at the pumping station and Alligator Lake. These are all located on the Sibley Unit. Boats are permitted on four of the bodies of water, the remainder are shore fishing only.

*Do you have any special activities for handicapped persons?*

Yes, we have a special hunt for wheelchair-dependent handicapped hunters covering 4 weeks in the year during the months of November and December. Persons must pre-register to reserve a hunting stand for specific dates. This hunt has been well received during the past 3 years, we have hunters as far away as northern Mississippi take advantage of this special hunt. Each year our use numbers increase.

*Do you allow school groups and birders to tour the refuge?*

Yes, we have tours that are set up each year for birders, and days are set aside for these special groups. We also welcome school groups and boy scout and girl scout troops to tour the refuge and take special advantage of our nature trail. Refuge personnel make arrangements and set up auto or hiking tours.

*Do you hire youth during the off season to work on the refuge?*

This refuge has participated in the 8-week Youth Conservation Corps Program for the fifth consecutive year. Three high school students between the ages of 15-18 are randomly chosen from the local private and public high school systems to participate in this program. Enrollees complete an assortment of projects ranging from painting, boundary marking, yard maintenance and planting. Field trips are planned to show them what wildlife habitat management is all about.